

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A network termination unit, comprising:

- a) a detector operable to receive command signals from a user, wherein the command signals include a pause signal;
- b) a controller operable to control access to content;
- c) a timer operable to time a pause interval initiated at reception of the pause signal; and
- d) a source of alternative content, operable to provide the controller with alternative content when the pause interval reaches a predetermined length of time.

2. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the network termination unit further comprises a set-top box.

3. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the network termination unit further comprises a cable modem.

4. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the controller is a processor.

5. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the controller is a microcontroller.

6. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the controller and the timer are provided by a central processing unit.

7. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the source of alternative content is located in a memory located in the network termination unit.

8. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the source of alternative content is a connection to a remote server.

9. The network termination unit of claim 1, wherein the source of alternative content is programmable by the viewer.

10. A video content server, comprising:

- a) a port operable to receive signals from at least one network termination unit, wherein the signals include a pause signal;

- b) a repository of alternative content; and
- c) a transmitter, operable to transmit alternative content to network termination units sending pause signals.

11. The video content server of claim 10, wherein the signals received include content  
5 identification signals and the alternative content transmitted is based upon the content identification signals.

12. The video content server of claim 10, wherein the alternative content transmitted is determined by viewer preferences.

13. The video content server of claim 10, wherein the repository of alternative content  
10 includes advertisements.

14. The video content server of claim 10, wherein the repository of alternative content includes music.

15. A method of providing alternative content to video content viewers, the method comprising:

- 15 a) detecting a pause signal from a user experiencing a main source of content;
- b) initiating a pause interval;
- c) timing the pause interval; and
- d) providing alternative content if the pause interval exceeds a predetermined period of time.

20 16. The method of claim 15, wherein providing alternative content further comprises accessing a local store of alternative content.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the method further comprises receiving a cancel signal and resuming distribution of the main source of content.

25 18. The method of claim 15, wherein providing alternative content further comprises accessing a remote store of alternative content.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein the method further comprises providing an interface to the user allowing the user to select at least one source of alternative content prior to providing the alternative content.

20. A network termination unit, comprising:

- a) a means for receiving command signals from a user, wherein the command signals include a pause signal;
- b) a means for controlling access to content;
- c) a means for timing a pause interval initiated at reception of the pause signal; and
- d) a means for providing alternative content, operable to provide the means for controlling access to content with alternative content when the pause interval reaches a predetermined length of time.

21. The network termination unit of claim 20, wherein the means for controlling access to content is a processor.

22. The network termination unit of claim 20, wherein the means for controlling access to content is a microcontroller

23. The network termination unit of claim 20, wherein the means for controlling access to content and the means for timing are provided by a central processing unit.

24. The network termination unit of claim 20, wherein the means for providing alternative content is located in a memory located in the network termination unit.

25. The network termination unit of claim 20, wherein the means for providing alternative content is a connection to a remote server.

26. A video content server, comprising:

- a) a means for receiving signals from at least one network termination unit, wherein the signals include a pause signal;
- b) a means for storing alternative content; and

c) a means for transmitting operable to transmit alternative content to network termination units sending pause signals.

27. The video content server of claim 26, wherein the signals received include content identification signals and the alternative content transmitted is based upon the content identification signals.

28. The video content server of claim 26, wherein the alternative content transmitted is determined by user preferences.

29. The video content server of claim 26, wherein the means for storing alternative content includes advertisements.

30. The video content server of claim 26, wherein the means for storing alternative content includes music.

31. An article containing machine-readable code that, when executed, causes a machine to:

- a) detect a pause signal from a user;
- b) initiate a pause interval;
- c) time the pause interval; and
- d) provide alternative content if the pause interval exceeds a predetermined period of time.

32. The article of claim 31, wherein the article contains further code that, when executed, causes the machine to provide an interface to the user allowing the user to select at least one source of alternative content prior to providing the alternative content.

33. The article of claim 31, wherein the article contains further code that, when executed, causes the machine to receive a cancel signal and resume distribution of main content upon reception of the cancel signal.